

DDSP Fire Department Dedicates New Engine

By Sherre Mitten-Bell, DDSP Public Affairs

The Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, PA (DDSP) Fire Department, also known as York County Fire Department 69, held a traditional Fire Engine Housing Ceremony on September 11, 2004, to officially dedicate their new 2004 KME engine at the Public Safety Building 911, named so in memory of those who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

DDSP Public Safety Center Director James Rimel welcomed attendees who came out on a Saturday morning to participate in and appreciate the symbolism of an Engine Housing Ceremony. Among the attendees were several retirees, including DDSP Fire Chiefs, who were instrumental in the development of the quality programs and services provided.

Retired Fire Chief James Derstine, an expert in Fire Department history, explained the tradition of housing a new piece of fire apparatus which includes pushing the apparatus into the station three times, symbolizing the Holy Trinity. During the ceremony, the Pumper was first ushered in by special guests including DDSP Commander CAPT Jim Naber, SC, USN, to signify their pride and support for the firefighters. The second ushering was by the retirees of the Fire Department. The third pushing was done by the personnel who would use and maintain the truck. As the Pumper weighs nearly 50,000 pounds, engine power was used to assist the participants. For added luck, a dollar was placed face up behind one of the wheels before it was moved. In closing the ceremony, the Pumper was blessed into service by SFC Terrance Brailsford, USA.

CAPT Naber expressed his high regard for the department and for the diligent service it provides to the New Cumberland military installation and to the local community as well. "I am very proud of

our Fire Department personnel. York County Station 69 routinely provides assistance to the surrounding departments," said Captain Naber.

"Emergency response is often very labor intensive and requires many types of resources. Very seldom do you find a community able to provide all the manpower and emergency apparatus needed to control an average incident. Surrounding communities rely on each other's resources during an incident through mutual aid agreements. I am delighted to know that the local community will also benefit from this new KME engine."



DDSP's new 2004 KME engine.



During the traditional housing ceremony, the engine is pushed into the station three times. This tradition dates back to the 1800s.

The Tradition of "Housing" a New Piece of Firefighting Equipment

According to Retired Fire Chief James Derstine, an expert in Fire Department history, firehouse legend holds that the origins of the housing ritual dates back to the early 1800s. Fire companies would invite guests to their stations to see their new rigs. They backed their apparatus in by pushing it into the stations instead of hooking up the horse teams. A housing ceremony was then started from those early days. The community would get involved along with the firefighters, in a gala event denoting a new start. The firefighters, would clean and decorate the station, wear their best parade dress uniforms, and invite the community to help celebrate the company's new good fortune.